



September 1999

DEAR FRIENDS:

The National Park Service (NPS) is undertaking a major effort to plan for the future of the **Mary McLeod Bethune Council House National Historic Site**. The NPS's goal is to develop a general management plan (GMP) for the site. A planning team has been formed to work on the GMP. The draft plan will present alternative ideas for protecting the resources, meeting the needs of our visitors, and addressing the concerns of neighbors and partners. This plan will be combined with an environmental impact statement (EIS) that will analyze the impacts of implementing each of the alternative ideas for future management of the site. The draft plan will be sent out for public review and comment. Eventually, a preferred alternative will be chosen and approved. To develop this plan, NPS staff will work closely with other federal agencies, private landowners, interested parties – including the Mary McLeod Bethune Council House Federal Advisory Commission – and the general public. The approved GMP will be used to guide the management of the Mary McLeod Bethune Council House National Historic Site for the next 10 to 15 years.

Together the National Park Service, the public, and other interested individuals and groups will explore ways to answer the following questions:

- * What should we do to ensure that the site and its resources are protected, restored, and maintained in good condition?
- * What should we do to ensure that visitors and the general public learn and understand the purpose and significance of the site?
- * What level and type of visitor use are appropriate for the site?
- * How can we work with partners (other interested groups and individuals) more effectively to protect the resources and increase support for the site?

You are invited to share your ideas on these and other questions with the planning team by completing and mailing the enclosed comment form. We want you to participate in this planning process. The Mary McLeod Bethune Council House National Historic Site presents an exciting opportunity to preserve and tell people about the history, lives, and contributions of African American women. The National Park Service has created a special web site to provide information for the Mary McLeod Bethune Council House National Historic Site. The address is <http://www.nps.gov/mamc>. Information about the GMP for the Mary McLeod Bethune Council House and all current NPS plans may be reached at <http://www.nps.gov/planning>.

We appreciate your interest and look forward to working with you as we plan for the future of the Mary McLeod Bethune Council House National Historic Site.

Sincerely,

Diann Jacox, Site Manager,
Mary McLeod Bethune Council House National Historic Site



THE PLANNING PROCESS

The purpose of NPS GMPs is to ensure that each park unit has a clearly defined direction to protect resources and to provide public access. A GMP for this historic site will give decision makers a basic foundation and direction for managing the site for the next 10 to 15 years. The plan will be developed in consultation with NPS managers, interested parties, and the general public.

GMPs focus on why parks are established and what site conditions and visitor experiences should be achieved and maintained over time. These management plans often take a rather long-range, conceptual view. They are conducted by multidisciplinary teams, including site managers and technical experts, who consult with other knowledgeable people inside and outside the Park Service and with the general public. In reaching decisions concerning future management of the site, planning teams seek, to the extent possible, to reach agreement among the park staff, NPS leaders, other agencies with jurisdiction by law or expertise, and the public. The management plan is built firmly on the reasons for the park's establishment -- its purpose, and significance.

The public involvement element in developing a general management plan for this site will help decision makers learn about the concerns, issues, expectations, and values of visitors, site neighbors, people with traditional cultural ties to the site, cooperating associations, other partners, scientists and scholars, other government agencies, and concessionaires. Through public involvement the National Park Service shares information about the planning process, issues, and proposed management actions, learns about the values placed by other people and groups on the site's resources and visitor experiences, and builds support for implementing the approved plan among local publics, visitors, Congress, and others.

The general management plan for the Mary McLeod Bethune Council House National Historic Site will not include facility design, resolve all issues, or guarantee funding for the site. Rather, it will describe the general path that the National Park Service intends to follow in managing the site during the next 10 to 15 years.

NPS policy for general management plans generally requires that an environmental impact statement be prepared concurrently. An environmental impact statement has a number of requirements, including specified review and comment periods. These requirements affect both the scope and timing of the management plan.



All photos are from the archives at the
Mary McLeod Bethune Council House
National Historic Site



WHAT IS HAPPENING NEXT?

Developing a vision for the future of Mary McLeod Bethune Council House National Historic Site is the primary role of the general management plan. Your comments are important for identifying issues and desired visitor experiences and will be used to build on the draft purpose and significance statements and finalize them. An open house will be held in October 1999 to provide an additional opportunity for public input on purpose, significance, issues, and areas of concern.

The next step will be the development of possible visions for the future (called alternatives). Evaluating a set of alternatives enables us to compare and contrast the advantages and disadvantages of one course of action over another and provides the sound approach to decision making required by the National Environmental Policy Act. These visions (alternatives) will be sent to you for comment in Winter 1999.

Based on the range of alternatives and the comments received a preferred alternative will be selected. You will have an opportunity to comment on the preferred alternative in the draft GMP/EIS in 2000.



"I leave you love . . .
I leave you hope . . .
I leave you the challenge
of developing confidence in one another . . .
I leave you a thirst for education . . .
I leave you respect for the uses of power . . .
I leave you faith . . .
I leave you racial dignity . . .
I leave you a desire to live harmoniously
with your fellow men . . .
I leave you finally a responsibility
to our young people"



INTERPRETATION

- Can the National Park Service obtain footage of Mrs. Bethune from the National Archives? Would it be possible to have a continuous video/voice of Mrs. Bethune at the house? People would like to hear Mrs. Bethune's voice and see a pictorial history at the site.
- Bethune-Cookman College should participate in the plan.
- The era represented should extend from 1875 to the present.
- Use the house as a teaching mechanism.
- Encourage visitor participation and feedback.
- People living nearby do not know about the site; there needs to be more community outreach.
- Broaden the thinking of the surrounding community – talk about the Shaw district, Black Washington, and bring out the history of the city – not the national city, but the local city.
- Need street signs identifying the site's location; should be part of a self-guided tour of African American sites in Washington; locate brochures at heavily visited sites around the city.
- Explore period costumes worn by interpreters.
- Do a period piece on fashion, and explore doing a number of period themes.
- Spread the information on the Bethune Council House throughout the nation. Sending brochures to churches will help encourage visits.
- There needs to be something in Washington, D.C., with a prominent address in which visiting groups can learn about the accomplishments of African American women.
- African American people were movers and shakers in D.C. – let people know this.
- Create an interactive CD ROM for students and other visitors – could be distributed nationally.

MANAGEMENT/OPERATIONS

- Establish partnerships with other African American conventions/organizations nationwide and with churches, colleges, and associations.
- Accessibility: Is there a way to put in an elevator? Pay attention to its future uses -- especially maintaining the interior.
- Acquire the property next to the site to allow for expansion, accessibility, and archives. Look at various options for accessibility from the adjacent building.

ARCHIVES

- Are there other archives with information on Mrs. Bethune?
- It is important to have a place where African American women's history is collected.
- The limited history of African American women's accomplishments points out the need of having a place where African American women's history is collected and made available for researchers.
- We should feel proud and explore our heritage.
- Encourage our kids to see what has happened in the past.
- Put the organizations' records in one place.
- Raise consciousness in the African American community of the importance of and need for preserving materials.
- Move archives to another building that is centrally located or purchase adjacent building for archives.
- Increase the space for researchers.

Throughout the process you are invited to share ideas with the planning team by completing and mailing comment forms. You can also call Diann Jacox, the site manager, at (202) 673-2402 or Terri Urbanowski, the job captain for this project, at (303) 969-2277.

STEP	PLANNING ACTIVITY	PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES
1	Project Startup. Assembled planning team, developed project goals, determined the scope of the project and designed the process for carrying out the project. (Fall 1997)	
2	Identify the Planning Context. Reaffirmed the purpose and significance of the park, determined issues and concerns, and gathered and analyzed information. (1998)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Read newsletters and send us your comments❖ Attend public meetings❖ Attend open house
3	Develop and Evaluate Alternatives. We are currently in this step. A reasonable range of alternative future park conditons and management for the site will be developed. The potential consequences of implementing each alternative will be evaluated. Based on this initial assessment and public input, a preferred alternative (which could be a new concept) will be identified for the park. (Fall 1999)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Read newsletters and send us your comments❖ Attend public meetings
4	Prepare and Publish the Draft GMP/EIS. A draft GMP/EIS will be prepared and distributed for public review. The draft document will describe the planning context, management alternatives, and impacts. (Summer-Fall 2000)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Read draft plan and send your comments
5	Revise and Publish the Final GMP/EIS. Appropriate changes will be made to the draft document based on public comments, environmental analysis, and other information. The final GMP/EIS will then be distributed. (Winter 2001)	
6	Implement the Plan. After a record of decision is issued, the management directions in the plan will be carried out as funding allows.	





WHERE ARE WE IN THE PROCESS?

The GMP for the Mary McLeod Bethune Council House was initiated in the of fall 1997. Around that time, a federal advisory commission of experts in fields related to the site's archival collection, historical themes and management was appointed to assist the National Park Service in developing a GMP. Together the park staff, members of the advisory commission, and technical specialists from the NPS offices in Washington, D.C., and Denver, Colorado, form the planning team for the GMP.

The planning team has held three meetings to get public input, the results of which follow later in this newsletter. What we heard from these meetings and workshops with the planning team, along with the legislation that established the site, have formed the basis for the draft purpose and significance that follow.

Soon after development of the draft purpose and significance statements, changes in personnel, including the site manager and job captain of the planning team, resulted in a delay of the planning process. Now a new site manager, Diann Jacox, and job captain, Terri Urbanowski, are in place and the planning process is continuing from where we left off. We want to let you know what we've heard from you in the public meetings. We also want comments from you on the draft purpose and significance statements of Mary McLeod Bethune Council House National Historic Site.

PURPOSE OF THE SITE

Purpose statements provide the foundation for the management and use of each unit of the national park system. Purpose statements reaffirm the reasons why the site was established as a unit of the national park system. Purpose statements provide the foundation for and are central to the decisions about how the site will be managed and used. They also provide a rationale against which alternatives for managing the site can be measured. Finally, they help neighbors, visitors, and other users understand the framework in which managers make decisions.

The following draft purpose statements for Mary McLeod Bethune Council House National Historic Site are based on the establishing legislation (Public Law 102-211, Public Law 99-187, and Public Law 97-329) and laws and policies governing the management of all national park system units. The site was established to:

- * Interpret the life and legacy of Mary McLeod Bethune.
- * Document and interpret the history of African American women and their organizations during the Bethune era, 1875-1955.
- * Document and interpret the history of African American women in the struggle for civil rights in the United States.
- * Collect and preserve the individual and collective historical records of African American women and their organizations in keeping with the Bethune era and legacy.
- * Ensure the preservation, restoration, and maintenance of historic structures and features of the site to the period of most historical significance, 1943-66.
- * Preserve the historical furnishings and artifacts relating to Mary McLeod Bethune and the National Council of Negro Women.
- * Administer the site in accordance with the legislation (Public Law 102-211, December 11, 1991) to ensure the site's preservation and interpretation.
- * Enter into cooperative agreements with nonprofit groups/organizations as necessary to carry out the mission of the Mary McLeod Bethune Council House National Historic Site.



SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SITE

Significance statements identify the resources and values that are central to managing the site and express the importance of the site to our natural and cultural heritage. Significance statements do not inventory site resources; rather, they describe the site's distinctiveness and help place it in its regional and international contexts. Understanding the site's significance helps managers make decisions that preserve the resources and values necessary to accomplish the site's purposes.

The following are draft significance statements for the Mary McLeod Bethune Council House National Historic Site.

- * The Mary McLeod Bethune Council House National Historic Site served as the headquarters of the National Council of Negro Women from 1943-66. It was the last official Washington, D.C., residence of Mary McLeod Bethune, renowned educator, organizer, national political leader, a president of the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, and founder and president of the National Council of Negro Women.
- * It is at this site that Mary McLeod Bethune achieved her greatest national and international recognition.
- * At the Mary McLeod Bethune Council House National Historic Site, the first headquarters of the National Council of Negro Women, Bethune and the Council spearheaded strategies and developed programs that advanced the interests of African American women and the Black community.
- * The site is the location of the National Archives for Black Women's History and houses the largest manuscript collection of materials solely dedicated to African American women and their organizations.

WHAT WE'VE HEARD AT PUBLIC MEETINGS

A series of meetings to gather input from the public were held in 1998. The first one took place February 19 at the Bethune-Cookman College in Daytona Beach, Florida. The second one took place April 30 at the Newberry Library in Chicago, Illinois, and the final meeting was June 25 at the Sumner School in Washington, D.C. The comments, questions, and suggestions received at these meetings have been grouped into three categories: interpretation, management/operations, and archives.

